

What Is STARS?

STARS is a Vermont initiative designed to expand the ways providers are rewarded for program quality. The STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) program adds to the many efforts the Child Development Division (CDD) has already established to improve the quality of care for Vermont’s children.

STARS builds on Vermont’s model of recognizing accreditation and CDA as indicators of quality. Research conducted throughout Vermont over a two-year period found that providers wanted a variety of ways to demonstrate quality in addition to accreditation. Providers also felt steps on the path toward accreditation should be recognized. STARS therefore, was not designed to replace accreditation but rather to expand and complement the overarching goal of recognizing quality.

Who Can Apply?

Any provider regulated through the Child Development Division, which has met the regulatory compliance criteria, may apply. This includes registered and licensed family child care homes, licensed early childhood programs including public school programs, licensed school age care programs, nonrecurring care programs (e.g., resort area child care), and Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

STARS participation is not required for licensing or registration, however there are financial benefits and CDD will require programs to be in STARS or be accredited to be eligible for a variety of grants.

What Is The Application Process?

As a provider, you apply for STARS recognition by completing a self-assessment, and submitting supporting documentation.

- You may apply for recognition in five arenas. The five arenas are:
- compliance history
 - qualifications and training
 - families and community
 - program assessment
 - administration

You can choose whether to apply for one to three points in each arena for a total of 15 possible points. For any arena you can indicate that your program is operating according to state regulations and you are not seeking additional points.

Learning Partners, Inc., a contracted administrator, validates the self-assessment and supporting documentation. The Child Development Division then awards the appropriate level of STARS recognition. Certificates are valid for one year and must be renewed to continue participation.

Points are totaled across all five arenas to determine the number of STARS you will receive.

1-4 points	- One Star
5-7 points	- Two Stars
8-10 points	- Three Stars
11-13 points	- Four Stars
14-15 points	- Five Stars

What If I Am Already Accredited?

The Child Development Division understands the enormous effort providers undertake to achieve accreditation, therefore, a streamlined STARS process has been developed for nationally accredited programs. If you are accredited through NAEYC, NAFCC, NAA or NECPA you qualify for specific point levels in each arena. Head Start and Early Head Start child care centers who have achieved “Program of Quality” or “Program of Excellence” designation based on the most recent PRISM review are also eligible. Accredited and qualified Head Start programs will enter STARS at the four-star level if you:

- have been in business for 5 years
- have a good regulatory history
- include a copy of your accreditation award certificate and program improvement plan or notification of quality or excellence with your STARS application

Do Providers Receive Incentives?

As a STARS recognized provider, you become eligible to receive three different types of incentives: a one-time incentive payment, a higher tuition reimbursement (subsidy) payment on an ongoing basis through the Vermont child care subsidy program, and an assortment of special incentives set aside for STARS providers.

You receive a one-time financial incentive payment based on the number of stars earned. The incentive payments for accredited providers are in addition to the current CDD system of \$1,000 bonuses for accreditation, credentialing, and renewals.

The 2005 incentive payments are:

One Star	-	\$250
Two Stars	-	\$500
Three Stars	-	\$1000
Four Stars	-	\$1,150
Five Stars	-	\$1,550

In addition to a financial incentive, you are eligible to receive a higher tuition reimbursement (subsidy) rate through the Vermont child care subsidy program.

The higher 2005 reimbursement rates are:

One Star	-	+4%
Two Stars	-	+8%
Three Stars	-	+12%
Four Stars	-	+17.5%
Five Stars	-	+20%

As a recognized provider, you will be publicly acknowledged for your achievement in your local community. Participation in STARS enhances your application for facilities grants given by the Building Bright Spaces for Bright Futures Facilities Panel. With three or more stars, you become eligible to receive a Young Explorer computer learning center donated by IBM in support of STARS.

When Will My Program Be Ready To Apply For STARS?

You may apply for STARS at any time. Even if you feel your program is not operating at your ideal yet, do not hesitate to apply for STARS. STARS is designed to recognize providers in the arenas in which they are strongest, while they continue to improve in other arenas. Receiving even one star is an accomplishment and indicates that you have gone above and beyond Vermont’s basic regulatory standards.

Technical assistance and support is available from Learning Partners if you would like to work on any of the five arenas of evaluation or if you need help with the application process. Once you have received STARS, you will have continued access to technical assistance and other professional program development resources to continue upward mobility in STARS.

How Can I Apply?

You may request a STARS application by directly calling CDD at (800) 649-2642, contacting Learning Partners, Inc. at (802) 479-5261, or visiting the STARS website at www.STARSstepahead.org. No application fee is required.

Additional information on STARS, a list of recognized providers, and links to resources are available on the STARS website at www.STARSstepahead.org.



For More Information:

For information on STARS, or to receive an application to become a STARS recognized provider, call CDD at (800) 649-2642, Learning Partners at (802) 479-5261, or visit www.STARSstepahead.org.

The Child Development Division would like to thank the following for their donations in support of STARS:

**Child Care Fund of Vermont, a
component of The Vermont
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IBM



The Child Development Division (CDD) is the state agency charged with improving the well-being of Vermont’s children by ensuring safe, accessible and quality services are available for every child. When federal funds are provided to states for these purposes, CDD administers such funds.

CDD provides direct prevention and early intervention services and child care assistance payments to qualifying families. CDD also assists statewide, regional, and local partnerships through funding, policy direction, licensing regulation, research, technical assistance, and information services.

CDD is a division of the Department for Children and Families in the Agency of Human Services, and a key partner of The Vermont Alliance for Children: Building Bright Futures.

4/05



**You and
STARS
A Provider's Introduction
to the Step Ahead Recognition System**

Child Development Division
Department for Children and Families
Agency of Human Services
103 South Main Street
Waterbury VT 05671

General Information (800) 649-2642
Technical Assistance (802) 479-5261

www.STARSstepahead.org